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JORDAN'S MANUAL OF THE VERTEBRATES.¹—In this, the latest edition of this well-known work, Dr. Jordan has completely revised the text, turning it end for end, condensing and rewriting almost every page, as well as increasing its scope by admitting to its pages the littoral forms of the Atlantic Coast of the United States. The work is apparently fairly well done both by author and manufacturer, though we might criticise the classification adopted in some cases, or pick out here and there errors of anatomical statement, for Dr. Jordan is confessedly no anatomist, but takes his structural knowledge at second hand. Books of this kind constitute the most popular and useful introductions to the sciences of which they treat, but it must be remembered that they constitute introductions only.

The fault lies not in the keys but in the use to which they are put. They serve the poor teacher, and enable him to do the poorest kind of work with the least possible expenditure of brain force. All he has to do is to give the student a bird or a fish and one of these manuals and the work is done. The poor student, imagining that he is deriving mental discipline by the operation, but not clearly realising where it comes in, struggles with the inoffensive fish or fowl down through pages of "keys," until at last he captures a Latin name which seems to fit it. As has been wittily said, "it is like tracking a woodchuck to a hole, when you get there all you have is a hole." Yet this process is daily going on in hundreds of our high-schools and scores of our colleges to-day. In many an institution which rejoices under the name of University the biological students never learn a single anatomical fact, never hear a single embryological statement; their whole knowledge of the varied forms of life around them consists in having learned the names of a few dozen vertebrates and flowering plants. While the botanical manuals of Wood and Gray are largely responsible for the wide taste for botany in the United States, they are too often regarded as the *summum bonum* of the science by the teacher. True zoologists must be on the alert or similar works upon the animal side will be used in the same superficial way.

¹ Jordan, David Starr. A manual of the Vertebrate Animals of the Northern United States, including the district north and east of the Ozark Mountains, south of the Laurentian Hills, north of the southern boundary of Virginia, and east of the Missouri River. Inclusive of Marine species. Fifth edition. Chicago, 1888. Pp. 375.